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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSM-03 CCO-00
/076 W
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O 211556Z MAR 78
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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1527

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MOPS, SY, LE, IS
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: CONVERSATION WITH WALID JUMBLATT

1. WALID JUMBLATT CAME TO SEE ME MARCH 21 TO EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT SITUATION AND ASK WHAT I COULD TELL HIM ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR CEASE-FIRE AND INSTALLATION OF UNIFIL IN SOUTH LEBANON. I REVIEWED SITUATION ON GROUND WITH HIM AND SAID I WAS CONFIDENT ISRAELIS WOULD WITHDRAW PROVIDED CREDIBLE UNIFIL EXISTED AND OPERATING. THERE WOULD OF COURSE NEED TO BE CLOSE COORDINATION REGARDING WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAELIS AND REPLACEMENT BY UNIFIL, BUT THAT COULD BE WORKED OUT. CRITICAL FACTOR WOULD BE PALESTINIAN ATTITUDES. WHAT DID HE KNOW IF ANYTHING ABOUT THAT?

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2. JUMBLATT SAID NOTHING HAD BEEN SOLVED. PALESTINIANS HAD BEEN PUSHED NORTHWARD AND WERE NOW IMPINGING ON DRUZE COMMUNITIES. WHILE HE THOUGHT ARAFAT, WITH WHOM HE HAD MET YESTERDAY, WOULD PERHAPS KEEP FATAH QUIET FOR A WHILE, THE REJECTIONISTS WOULD NOT STAY QUIET. PALESTINIANS IN GENERAL COULD NOT GIVE UP MILITARY ACTION AGAINST ISRAEL PERMANENTLY BECAUSE THAT WOULD MEAN ABANDONMENT OF

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THEIR CAUSE. IF THEY DID NOTHING, THE WORLD WOULD FORGET THEM. THEY HAD NO COUNTRY OF THEIR OWN AND DID NOT CARE IF THEY DESTROYED LEBANON.

3. HE DID NOT KNOW WHY FATAH HAD CHANGED ITS POLICY AND STAGED BUS INCIDENT, BUT IT HAD SUCCEEDED IN EMBARRASSING ALL THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS AND THE SOVIETS AS WELL. I SAID SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN TEHRAN HAD SAID ARAFAT DID NOT KNOW ABOUT RAID IN ADVANCE. JUMBLATT SAID HE DOUBTED THAT. IT WAS OBVIOUS SOMETHING ON THAT SCALE COULD NOT BE CARRIED OUT WITHOUT HIS FOREKNOWLEDGE.

4. I ASKED HOW MANY MEN JUMBLATT HAD LOST IN THE FIGHTING IN THE SOUTH AND HE SAID ABOUT 25 WERE MISSING IN ACTION. HIS PARTY DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THEY WERE PRISONERS OR DEAD OR WHAT. HE DID NOT KNOW HOW MANY PALESTINIANS WERE LEFT IN THE SOUTH BECAUSE THESE WERE THINGS PALESTINIANS NEVER TOLD THEM. HE HAD TOLD ARAFAT THAT IF PALESTINIANS WANTED TO FIGHT ISRAEL, IN THE NEXT ROUND THEY SHOULD DO SO OUT IN THE OPEN FIELDS, NOT IN VILLAGES WHICH WERE LIKELY TO BE DRUZE.

5. I NOTED IN THIS RESPECT THAT ISRAELIS SEEMED NOT TO HAVE ATTACKED HASBAYAH AND GATHERED THAT THE DRUZE THERE HAD KEPT THE FEDAYEEN OUT. JUMBLATT SAID THAT ASIDE FROM A FEW ARTILLERY SHELLS DROPPED ON THE TOWN CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT WAS CORRECT. DRUZE LEADERSHIP THERE PLANNED TO COOPERATE WITH UN FORCES AND WOULD NOT START ANYTHING. IF THE MARONITES STARTED ANYTHING, HOWEVER, THEY WOULD TAKE UP THEIR ARMS AND RESIST.

6. I ASKED WHETHER THERE WERE ANY DRUZE REFUGEES FROM HASBAYYAH AND JUMBLATT SAID THERE WERE A FEW, MOST OF WHOM HAD GONE TO ALEY REGION. HIS PARTY, HOWEVER, ALSO HAD RESPONSIBILITY FOR A NUMBER OF SHIA FROM THE SOUTH WHO HAD COME TO BEIRUT. I NOED THAT WE HAD PEOPLE LIVING IN APARTMENT BUILDINGS IN AN AREA CONTROLLED BY HIS DRUZE JUST DOWN THE CORNICHE AND SAID THEY WERE THERE UNDER HIS PROTECTION. HE SAID TO LET HIM KNOW IF WE HAD TROUBLE.

7. WE TALKED BRIEFLY ABOUT RELIEF OPERATIONS. HE SAID IRAQIS WERE SENDING IN SUPPLIES -- MOSTLY WHEAT AND CLOTHES -- WHICH THEY HAD REFUSED TO TURN OVER TO THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT BUT INSISTED UPON TURNING OVER TO ARAFAT. HE SUPPOSED SHIPMENTS ALSO CONTAINED SOME WEAPONS BUT ARAFAT NEVER TOLD HIM ANYTHING ABOUT THAT.

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8. ON THE WAY OUT JUMBLATT SAID I SHOULD BE VERY
CAREFUL ABOUT MY OWN PERSONAL SECURITY. I ASKED HIM IF
HE HAD HEARD ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR AND HE SAID NO, BUT
THESE WERE DANGEROUS TIMES. I TOOK HIM TO THH FRONT
DOOR OF THE EMBASSY AND NOTED THAT HE HAS GREATLY
INCREASED HIS OWN SECURITY PROTECTION AND IS NOW
FOLLOWED BY A RANGE ROVER FULL OF MEN ARMED WITH
MACHINE GUNS A LA CAMILLE CHAMOUN.

9. COMMENT: JUMBLATT IS WORRIED ABOUT PALESTINIAN
PRESSURE, PHYSICAL AND POLITICAL, ON DRUZE COMMUNITY,
IN SPITE OF FACT HE HAS PEOPLE FIGHTING ON THEIR SIDE
IN SOUTH. HIS REMARKS ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF ALMOST
UNANIMOUS LEBANESE UNHAPPINESS WITH PALESTINIAN PRESENCE.
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THIS IS THE ONLY REAL CONSENSUS IN LEBANON TODAY; BUT
PERHAPS SOMETHING CAN BE BUILT FROM IT.
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